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Europeanisation

Social Actors and the Transfer of Models in EU-27

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The Europeanisation of interest groups in post-communist states: the case of Estonia

Juri Ruus

Introduction

Contemporary advanced democracies are more integrated and organised than ever before. Interest groups are organisations of people who want to shape the political process from outside the legislative and executive power branch. They are crucial in terms of the interaction between society and state and in terms of the quality of political decisions and democracy in general.

In democratic societies and within the democratic order there is a plurality of interest groups. Here the state has to decide whether intermediations with these groups would take the form of pluralism or corporatism (Dahl 1988, 1999, Mazey, Richardson 1993, Sabatier 1992, Danziger 2001). Developed or well advanced tripartite relations between the state, trade unions and business organisations have often been seen as the prerequisite for a strong economy in modern times. This democratic corporatism has an important social function: to secure social peace in a society, to mediate and propagate social partnership in society. Organised labour will be more likely to consider the macro-economic consequences of their wage policy demand if they are effectively incorporated into the decision-making structures of the state.

The purpose of this article is to study and analyse the major Estonian interest groups' Europeanisation. More specifically, the main aim of the research is to analyse the evolution of interest groups, their institutionalisation and their Europeanisation (Grote and Lang 2003, Radaelli 2002, Hughes 2004) on the basis of empirical data, interviews and surveys with the representatives of

different groups that have emerged since the country regained independence.

The hypothesis is that national level still matters in shaping policy, although the impact of Europeanisation from both the top-down and the bottom-up is becoming ever more important.

Europeanisation is usually discussed in terms of how top down pressures for change are received and implemented on national level (Goetz and Hix 2000, Schmidt 2001, Radaelli 2002). Rather than taking this vertical approach, this paper explores the horizontal level of EU policy formulation and the role of major interest groups in the new opportunity structures (Mazey and Richardson 1993). We focus on interest groups because they are such an essential element to politics and to public policy analysis. The first part of the article analyzes the development of social movements in the context of apparent regime change and Estonian post-communist transformation. The second, third and fourth part of the article focuses on trade- unions, green movement, business groups and their issues of Europeanisation.

The development of social movements in the context of Estonian post-communist transformation

Different phases of social movements can be distinguished in Estonia. The first is a broad Protest Movements phase (1987-1992), which could be further subdivided into a mythological phase (1987-1990) and an ideological phase (1990) with the elections of Estonian Congress. The second phase is the EU pre-accession period and the third is the post –accession period.

After Gorbachev's accession to power in 1985 and the declaration of the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, a nationally based opposition began to emerge. The closed society gradually began to transform into an open society.

National activities were initially connected with green issues, however, nationalist aspirations soon came to the fore. Non-associational groups based on oppositional grass-roots movements, such as the Estonian Popular Front Movement (Rahvarinne) came into the political arena had already begun to emerge by the end of 1980s. The movement began by advocating autonomy within the U.S.S.R, and later full independence. In the period 1988-1990, the gradualist political stance of Popular Front was challenged from two sides. The Stalinist 'Intermovement' fought against the dismantling of the Soviet Union, mostly gathering support from the Russian-speaking part of the population. The hard-liners of the transition (the so-called orthodox Communists) were socially backed by Intermovement. Their political aims varied from broad criticism of the Estonian national movement to demands for clear autonomy and secession.

On the other side, the Estonian nationalists of the Estonian Congress movement were not satisfied with the gradualist approach of Popular Front. They wanted to declare Estonia's independence right away, and set up an alternative parliament, representing the Estonian part of the population and advocated a 'restitution process' (Daatland and Svege 1999: 4). This approach presumed the continued legal existence of the interwar republic of Estonia and was based on the citizen committee movement. The aim was to emphasize that Estonia never belonged to the USSR, and that since the former was simply occupied by Soviet troops, juridical no secession was necessary. In apparent regime change three major social movements were umbrella movements for political party families and interest groups rise.

Since independence: non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and interest groups

In 1990, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, NGOs grew rapidly. Hundreds of educational

organisations, sports associations, professional groups and others met the registration requirement by submitting a funding agreement, articles of associations, a list of board members, a nominal fee, etc. Since 1988 more than 70 cultural societies and associations addressing the interests of ethnic minorities have been established, including the Estonian Union of National Minorities and the Union of the Slavic educational and charitable organisations. All together Estonia has today approx. 24 000 non-profit organisations. However, most of them are relatively non-political, such as resident, garage, and summer-cottage associations. Many of them have such scant resources that they are hardly capable of representing their interests in an efficient way (Foorum 2004, No.4).An estimated quarter of a million people, or every fifth resident of Estonia, is involved in these activities and the number is growing. The organisations also represent an increasingly significant economic power – they provide about 5 % of the jobs in Estonia.

Although Estonian NGOs suffer from organisational and financial shortcomings, efforts have been made to improve the state of non-profit groups through training programs, research and information changes. Nonetheless, popular participation in NGOs remains constrained partly because the existence of an independent third sector characterised a genuine volunteerism as opposed to the enforced volunteering activities during the Soviet period is still a relatively new phenomenon. Other factors include larger economic concerns, which limit much of the time available for people to spend on charitable and other activities, and a belief that civic initiatives will not solve the country's problems. While the exact proportion of the population involved with NGO activities is difficult to determine, one study found that less than 40 percent of people belong to at least one non-governmental group; broadly defined to include political parties; trade unions; professional and educational associations and charitable organisations. In addition to staff and volunteer shortages,

most NGOs suffer from limited institutional and organisational capacities.

In an effort to help remedy their organisational and financial concerns, non-profit organisations have demonstrated increasing willingness and ability to exchange information and cooperate with joint projects. The Network of Estonian Non-Profit organisations, an umbrella group for NGOs, provides programmes on diverse topics such as non-profit management, strategic planning, fund raising and attracting and using volunteers effectively. International contacts include: CAF Russia (Charities Aid Foundation), CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), CIVICUS European Foundation centre, Orpheus Civil Society Network, NCVO (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations), NISC (NGO Information and Support Centre), Non-Governmental Organisations Centre in Latvia, Lithuania, Finland. Usually the contacts contain mutual visits, workshops and roundtable discussions. To sum up, the government perception of democracy, in particular the NGO sector, has continued to improve as a result of efforts by certain non-profit groups. A document entitled “The Goals of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept”, which was signed by Parliament in December 2002, includes the aim of promoting civic initiative and participative democracy, laying the groundwork for structured consultation and negotiation between the authorities and interest groups. In fact the activities so far have taken place through citizen forums, cooperative councils, advisory boards both internally and internationally.

The Institutionalisation and europeanisation of trade-unions

To some extent corporatism is inevitable in modern industrial and post- industrial society. This is due to the fact that all interest groups are interested in their views and expectations being represented either directly or

indirectly. Trade Unions are probably the clearest visible access points into politics, as many members of trade unions are also members of political parties. They are the ones who clearly defend the labour interest in European and national arenas: government, parliament, powerful economical circles.

Today one of the priorities of International Trade Union Federation is to overcome organisational fragmentation. The idea of a merger between ICFTU and the WCI has been floated several times since the early 1990s. But the major problem lies in the duplication of efforts and rivalry between the two organisations (Josselin and Wallace 2001: 184). The situation with regard to Estonian trade-unions is somewhat similar. The question is how cohesive or fragmented are the trade-unions?

There was a tremendous increase in membership of trade unions in the Soviet time. Trade unions were considered to be as a "school of Communist ideology." The main aim of the Union's activity was to defend the interests of the working class and to fight against exploitation and capitalism. All the leaders and the main goals were chosen by the Communist Party. The latter supervised and controlled the organisation's activity regularly. In other words, under Soviet rule the Trade Unions were quasi-trade unions. The Communist Party appointed their leaders they were not independent, and their organisation was political.

Nowadays across EU countries union movements differ widely in terms of overall representation and support among workers. The membership of Estonian trade unions has decreased 11fold over the past seventeen years. For instance, membership of the central organisation of Estonian's trade unions (EAKL), the country's principal trade union association, has decreased from 500 000 in 1992 to 330 000 in 1993 200 000 in 1994 and only about 50 000 in 2008. EAKL became a member of the

International Confederation of Free Trade unions already in 1994 and a member of European Confederation of Trade Unions in 1998. EAKL's main programme statement includes the following: social justice, social partnership, human rights, tripartite negotiations, the principles and values of European Social Charter. (www.eakl.ee). Its main aim is to achieve full employment and to reduce the alienation of labour from state and in society.

However, many of the articles of the European Social Charter, particularly concerning social security principles (decent salary, old age pension, etc.) are not yet ratified by the Estonian parliament. The argument behind this non-ratification is essentially the following: 'why should we enact laws which we are not able to exercise in practice?' (interview with H.Taliga).

The second Estonian Trade Union is the Estonian Association of Employee Unions, founded in 1992 (TALO). The latter is an association involving cultural, state, educational civil servants, Estonian employees union confederation with 12 branch organisations all over the country with 32 000 members (www.talo.ee).

TALO's objectives are: to defend and represent employees' work, profession, income and education, as well as economic and social rights and interests with regard to their employers, the associations of the above, state and local authorities and other institutions.

Organising its work, TALO has followed the principles of activity of the ILO as well as internationally recognised trade unions such as ETUC, ICFTU and NFS. In May 1999, TALO was accepted as an observer member of ETUC. In November 2002, TALO became affiliated as a full member. The Nordic countries have strongly influenced the direction of TALO's foreign activities. So far the trade

unions have mostly learned from the experience of SACO in Sweden and AKAVA in Finland.

Both Trade Unions are partners of international union networks. The activities and contacts have spread from the above-mentioned two countries to other European trade union organisations. Trade-union representatives are taking part in the work of NFS/CNTU (Council of Nordic Trade Unions) are involved in various working groups of NFS; (interview with H.Taliga). From the year 1999 TALO takes part in the work of the Baltic Trade Union Council (www.talo.ee). Both trade unions are putting rather high value towards European ones: social security, social protection, etc. The institutions' international ideological aims are:

1. Participation of trade unions in the process of European integration.
2. Following the European social model and respective principles of European Social Charter in questions of social security and social protection
3. Demanding fulfilment of the requirements of the European Social Charter from the Government and other institutions, and mediating relevant information to the public.
4. Continuing cooperation with ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation), applying for TALO being accepted as a full member of ETUC and being involved in all working bodies of ETUC.
5. Approaching ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) in order to continue and develop informative cooperation.

6. Developing active cooperation primarily with the AKAVA of Finland, SACO of Sweden, and other central organisations and, if common interests appear (free movement of the labour force, approval of diplomas or professional standards, etc.), also with similar Trade Union central organisations in other European countries.

7. Continuing the cooperation with the BTUC (Baltic Trade Union Council) in order to coordinate the activity of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian trade unions and assisting partners from the point of view of solidarity. (www.eakl.ee/uudised0203191.htm).

What have the trade unions achieved today? It seems that their position in society is relatively weak. The ability of these organisations to achieve a social impact has been made more difficult by the Soviet past, when trade unions were viewed as an inseparable part of the communist party structure and ideology. Many people still think that trade unions represent outdated views and values. The organisations have relatively low legitimacy, a marginal impact on people, and often try to gain influence from external sources.

In Estonia, employees who are members of trade-unions represent only 30 % of wage-earners, which is not yet comparable with other EU countries (interview with H.Taliga). By way of comparison, in Scandinavia 90 % of wage-earners belong to trade-unions.

Up until 2000, trade unions in Estonia were treated as part of the non-profit sector, and the juridical aspects of trade unions activity were elaborated only eight years ago. Special trade union laws exist in most EU states. Are trade unions following European rules? First of all, there is a contradiction between the law of public service and trade

unions activity and International labour organisation principles. The Public Service Law prohibits strikes among public service sector. The argument behind such a notion is loyalty to the state, which is expected from this particular category of workers. EAKL has sent a letter of notice to both international institutions-organisations: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and European Confederation of Trade Unions (www.eakl.ee/uudised0203191.htm).

Secondly, in 2000, two trade unions signed a treaty of mutual cooperation, where the sides highlighted the main aims of trade unionism in the country. However, it was also emphasised that each of the two is granted relative autonomy in pursuing its own goals. Joint actions include questions of general trade union ideology, law-making processes, social policy and wage issues. The frequency of meetings and information sharing were also agreed upon.

Today the two trade unions are coordinating their activities in all strategic policy areas. For instance, a joint letter supporting free movement of labour in the EU was sent to the prime minister of Estonia. In tripartite negotiations, the partners inform each other about their standpoints early in advance, thus enabling each to coordinate, and formulate joint standpoints in negotiations with government. Also during 2004-2008 strikes involving teachers and other employees in the educational sector, which were organised during the first May celebrations, were coordinated and supervised by both sides. (see also Rodi 2002: 48, www.eakl.ee/uudised0203191.htm).

As in other EU states trade unions use different tactics and strategies in order to achieve their goals. There are at least seven tactics that the trade-unions can use in order to fulfil their goals: Lobby, agitation, forming coalitions, pressure form grass-roots level, court tactics, hard-line tactics, media usage, etc. In 1994-2008 the trade unions

have arranged fifteen major strikes in Estonia (interview with H.Taliga). In most cases, the demands of the protesters were more or less satisfied by the government.

One of the peculiarities of the Estonian case is that the trade unions tend to use more negative tactics in comparison with some other European counterparts. The national trade-unionists greatly value mass level actions. According to questionnaires, the leaders of trade unions considered rallies and demonstrations to be one of the most important and efficient means to achieve their goals. Whereas Scandinavian trade unions use lobbying, Estonian trade unions favour demonstrations, strikes, boycotts. Whereas in many EU countries lobbyists' prefer to work in different committees, Estonian trade unions do not seriously consider this an efficient means of achieving their goals. In other words the trade unions try to protect their rights and fulfil their goals by going to the streets to demonstrate. The national trade unions have seldom used court appeals in pursuing goals, which sets them apart from many counterparts in Europe and America. Why? The main reason is the lack of sufficient financial resources. (See also Rodi 2002: 51, 56, 59)

To sum up, the system of labour relations is its infancy and remains weak. Social partnership, common to many EU member states is only just beginning to gather steam. One of the reasons for this is that trade unions have been divided for many years, ignoring each other in the tripartite negotiations, lacking unity and failing to actively pursue their goals. Membership is still weak and many firms, factories, enterprises have no trade unions at all. Although this situation is changing, at the level of the general population, trade unions are still largely perceived as remnants of old Soviet regime. The question is, how can these institutions become more Europeanised?

First of all, the trade unions should increase their membership and also consider the relevance of using

various tactics. Secondly, trade unions in order to increase the ranks of their members should use more convincing rhetoric, publish more articles in the media, set up their own representation in Brussels, etc. There is a long way to go in explaining the benefits the powerful trade unions might bring by promoting social dialogue between employees and employers. According to polls, people believe the best way of influencing the political decisions is through meetings with officials, members of parliament and local government authorities, followed by appeals to media (www.turu-uuringute.ee).

It seems that protest actions such as demonstrations, strikes, pickets should not be the main means of action, due to questions about whether they are necessary and efficient, especially in view of their cost. What are the real benefits of these actions? What immediate effect do they bring?

The efficiency of Trade unions should grow in tandem with the general political and economical development of a society. Obviously, the relative stability of trade union action is achieved when a sharp social differentiation between different layers of society diminishes and a prosperous middle class emerges. The latter is still in an embryonic stage, yet it is certainly beginning to grow. Even though the trade unions face serious problems, their activism and the Europeanisation of their role in policy shaping is increasing especially since EU accession.

Europeanisation of green movements

As in many new EU states, Greens in Estonia started as a protest movement and ended up as a government party. The Greens were twice elected to national parliament, in 1992 and 2007. A number of Greens were also elected to local governments. In the 2007 elections the Greens gained 6 mandates in 11 in Estonian Riigikogu and in the 2004 elections for the European parliament. Mr. Marek

Strandberg, leader of Greens party, was able to gather 5340 (2,3 per cent of total) votes. Thus, the Greens have become entrenched in the political landscape and generally become fairly well institutionalised, as in many EU member-states.

The emergence of the Greens is strongly connected with the Estonian Green Movement (*Eesti Roheline Liikumine*). One could say that the Greens are the political branch of the Estonian Green movement (EGM) and European Greens organisation, which had a strong influence on political development in Estonia. The Green Movement was already founded during the Soviet occupation in 1988. In the 80s, people became very aware of environmental pollution, which was the result of certain incidents related to the environment. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 can be seen as the starting point of a series of environmental scandals. The “phosphorus crisis” in 1987 was produced by plans announced in Moscow to build a new mine in Russia and other Soviet republics. The ‘phosphate awakening’ was not confined to ecological questions. There was suddenly a new mood in the air, which amounted to a crisis of confidence (Arter, 1996, 94). The reason for this feeling among the population was that all cases of environmental pollution were caused by the Soviet authorities and there was no way to claim them, because there was no legislation regarding responsibility for nature. Among the population, the feeling arose that there was a need to protect nature from the Soviet regime and that the only way to achieve this goal was by replacing those responsible for the pollution.

EGM turned into a nationwide grassroots organisation. It was internationally recognised and became a full member of Friends of the Earth already in 1989. Through this organisation EGM gained attention and support from western countries. EGM also registered in the same year as a political party, the Estonian Greens. It became the member of the European Green Association at the same

year. The Green movement together with the green parties of the countries located in the Baltic Sea region established the Baltic- Scandinavian Information Centre to put more pressure on governments to respect previous commitments to reduce their pollution of the sea.

Among the active members of the Green Movement were mostly young people united by a common concern about their common environment. As in many East and Central European states, environmentalism became an extended umbrella under which a diverse array of anti-system grievances were mobilised (see also Arter, 1996, 94).

In 1989, Nordic ministers initiated regular visits to Estonia and the other Baltic States, which could be understood initially as a demonstration of their support for the people's desire for independence. Thus, the Green Movement opened Estonia to Europe and the world.

Today it has a nation-wide active network and more than 3000 individual members. It has become one of the most influential environmental groups in Estonia. The movement has adopted the mission of responding to the regional environmental problems brought by the political and social changes and to protect natural resources at grassroots, national and international levels. Its activities are carried out in the framework of seven permanent working groups that are dealing with the following issues: Consumption, Energy and Atmosphere, Forestry, Transport, Water, Youth. In addition to permanent working groups, there are more specific EU projects such as assessing the possible impacts of large-scale infrastructure investment projects by the EU. As an NGO they have to deal with the problem of how to finance their activities. Therefore they depend on support from other organisations, foundations and individuals, through membership fees (interview with V. Lahtvee).

The function of the Green Movement today does not differ much from the function they had at their peak in the 80s. Today they have taken responsibility for informing the population about EU environmental topics, organising discussions and bringing people with the same aims together.

Estonia had no national environmental legislation at all until 1990. After regaining independence, new legislation to regulate the use of natural resources, environmental protection and spatial planning had to be prepared. The development in this area was so fast that by 1995 most of the necessary acts had already entered into force. The legislative development accelerated even more during the EU enlargement process. The basic question the Greens posed was whether Estonia could achieve the goal of sustainable development alone or inside the European Union.

Estonian environmental legislation is heavily influenced by EU directives. Following international documents, in 1997 Estonia adopted its first National Environmental Strategy (NES). The Strategy is based on internationally accepted principles, ie. on international environmental agreements and it summarises the main aims in ten policy goals: promotion of environmental awareness; introduction of clean technologies; reduction of negative environmental effects of the energy sector; improvement of air quality; reduction of waste generation and improvement of waste management; elimination of past pollution, etc. (CEP, 2001: 11). These goals are general and mostly can be seen as long-term goals. In addition, Estonia adopted in 1998 the first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in which 658 projects were set, which aim to achieve these goals. The NEAP was a three-year plan and was worked out in close cooperation with the European Union. The second NEAP from 2001 was managed entirely by Estonian experts (CEP, 2001: 14).

The Estonian Greens have been actively participating in all major European events and institutions -Friends of the Earth, WWWL, European Greens, European Environmental Bureau. The Greens were involved in the campaign 'Greening the treaty', which led to the inclusion in the Amsterdam treaty of several articles to protect sustainable development and aided the elaboration of the so-called Environmental Space conception. Regular and frequent bilateral and multilateral coordination and networking workshops take place, particularly with colleagues of Scandinavia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Positions and mission statements drawing attention to most burning environmental issues are frequently debated and presented (interview with V.Lahtvee). Only relatively recently after the institutionalisation of the Estonian greens has an exchange of green parties strategies been added to conventional agenda.

The Greens are trying to mobilise public opinion. They are on the one hand heavily influenced by EU directives and on the other hand by national experts. As we can see (app II), green values and orientations are fairly evenly spread and supported by the main political actors.

The Europeanisation of business groups

The Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce (ECAC) represents rural communities' interests. The institution was established in 1996 as an association of agricultural producers and processors in private law. As of 1997, a number of organisations and institutions supporting the food sector have joined this body (trade enterprises, education institutions, etc.). By 2004, the ECAC had 150 members, including 15 local and three national associations of agricultural producers as well as five larger professional associations. The institution has its own representation in Brussels. In Estonia six agricultural organisations supervised by EPKK (Estonian Farmers

Central Alliance) represent Estonia in the COPA/COGECA framework. Most of them have been included recently in advisory boards attached to the EU (interview with A.Ly. Reimaa). For instance, the Estonian Farmers Federation (4000 members) mainly defends Estonian farmers' internal, self-production interests in order to be competitive on the European market. The aim of the ECAC is to value Estonian agricultural products, to protect local food production in domestic and foreign markets through its services, to support cooperation between Estonian farmers and food processors, to support the trade of agricultural produce and food in domestic and foreign markets, to disseminate necessary information including EU matters to its members.

To achieve its aims, the ECAC has tried to keep up with the changing times. Ever since its foundation, the ECAC has expanded its fields of activity and in 2004 the ECAC updated its structure as well. It seems that now they can be determined by the clearest features and they have a stable output in the mass media.

The main mission of Association of Estonian Organisation of Big Enterprises (ESEA) is to create a favourable investment climate in the country. It should be stressed that the institution has had a great deal success in achieving its aims. In contrast to many EU states, Estonia has an extremely low tax system, companies do not pay profit tax, etc. The organisation has intensively cooperated with the other political parties and interest groups such as EKTK-(Estonian Trade and Commerce), AEEI-(Association of Estonian Employers and Industry), as well as ESEA- Ukraine and ESEA- Lithuania. The organisation has several representations abroad, with foreign missions in Brussels, Dublin, Rotterdam, Haag, Amsterdam, Washington DC, New York.

The Estonian Employers' Confederation is the most representative employers organisation both nationally and

internationally. The major branches of economy and big business are almost all represented in this organisation. The Estonian Employers' Confederation is a non-profit, independent umbrella organisation, which is based on voluntary membership by employers in the Republic of Estonia. The Employers' Confederation represents 24 branch organisations that bring together more than 1500 companies and 60 single large enterprises, which employ 35 % of private sector employees of Estonia. The Estonian Employers' Confederation is a member of IOE (International Organisation of Employers) and a member of UNICE (Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe) and participates regularly in different workshops, sessions and meetings. The Estonian Employers' Confederation is recognised by the Government of Estonia and trade unions as a social partner and as in other EU countries participates in tripartite and bilateral negotiations and commissions.

EVEA (Association of Estonian Small and Medium Size Enterprises) brings together more than 500 firms and enterprises, which have less than 50 employees in Estonia. The main mission of the EVEA is the defence of the vital interests of small enterprises; the defence of small enterprise interests in tripartite negotiations: securing favourable loan and export conditions in accordance with the principles outlined in European Small Enterprise Charter (<http://www.evea.ee/index2htm>).

EVEA is a member of UEAPME since 1993. The latter is the employer's organisation representing the interests of European crafts, trades and SME's (Small and medium sized enterprises) at EU level. UEAPME represents more than 11 million companies, which employ around 50 million people across Europe. UEAPME is a recognised European Social Partner. It is a non-profit seeking and non-partisan organisation.

As the European SME umbrella organisation, UEAPME incorporates 78 member organisations consisting of national cross-sectarian SME federations, European branch federations and other associate members, which support the SME family.

Gallup companies have undertaken public surveys during the last years and this makes it possible to analyze the interest groups' influence on political institutions. Many people believe that political parties do not represent voters, but pursue the goals of their own. It is notable that interest groups, which have tried to strengthen positions on the economy, have been the most successful. However, the borders between the activities of the interest groups and business, based often on personal relations, are blurred and somewhat harder to see.

There are linkages between the institutional groups and the political parties in government coalitions. The state attempts to influence the activities of the state owned companies and funds via the appointment of governmental representatives to these organisations' councils. The more powerful interest groups are in the financial sector, specifically banking, trade, transit firms and enterprises. These are widely known, not only internally, but also internationally. It should be emphasised that these interest groups in large part determine the success of Estonian economy. In contrast to many EU countries, the anti-monopoly law is missing in Estonia, which gives these institutions a rather open field of activity. Party affiliation and meetings with ruling party elites are common between these institutions. According to public opinion polls the banks have the highest impact, bypassing even political parties. They have an even stronger impact on law-making than political parties (<http://www.ut.ee/ABVKeskus/huvigrupid/huvigrupid.html>).

To sum up, big business institutions engaged more readily at the European level than small ones. This can be

explained in resource dependency terms, because big businesses with their well defined interests and well funded Brussels based offices are able to organise in ways the small business representatives with their often conflicting interests are unable to do (see also Coen and Dannreuther 2001: 257). According to interview data (see table I) the biggest problems facing Estonian EU representatives in Brussels are the lack of staff resources and relatively low coordination of multilateral activities between different state institutions.

Table I

According to interview data the biggest problems facing Estonian EU representatives in Brussels are: (percentage)

Low human resource	55,5
The necessity to have more intensive cooperation with the state chancellery supervising EU affairs	33,3
Low coordination of activities in Brussels	11,1
The lack of professional knowledge	0
Don't know	0

Compiled by the author

Conclusion

Europeanisation has a broad meaning. Generally the concept refers to the relationship between the new forms of governance located at the level of EU, and the more traditionally anchored statehood. Many authors (Hughes, Radaelli, Greenwood, Sasse, Gordon) argue that national administrations become more and more Europeanised due to the decisions of the EU increasingly becoming part of national decision –making processes. However, there is no strong reason to believe that this process leads to any quick change in national structures and mentalities.

Europeanisation empowers some groups, and hence weakens others. As in many East and Central-European

countries, ecological movements paved the way towards independence. The engagement of large associational interest groups at the European level took place more readily than that of small ones. Network-like configurations had already been established among many Estonian interest groups, and here big business had advantage. The rich and prosperous layers of society are better represented, which means the democratic process is biased in their favour, and as a result, the lower strata are more poorly represented.

Small states have limited human resources. In a small society it is wiser to for groups to organise under different umbrella organisations. Not all actors believed that their interests were best pursued at European level, and not all societal actors enjoy either the financial resources to act or the organisational capacity to express the clearly defined interests that are required. Most associations are of recent origins and have had limited time to find their own style.

Thus, the impact of different interest groups in the shaping of policy is different. Some groups have established international connections prior to political regime change, during regaining independence time deepened even more domestic as well as international institutionalisation. By participating in transnational groups, grass roots organisations learn to participate in policy-making at the European level. However, the interest groups face serious problems primarily concerning their representation and legitimacy, the weakness of societal dialogue, the low inclination of citizens to participate and mobilise. These are the reasons why political decision-making processes are frequently uninformed and reflection of the interest groups aspirations is occasional on national as well as supranational level.

Some envisage a so-called spill-back scenario at EU level, whereby the process of Europeanisation could lead social

actors to defend national and narrow interests without participating to any significant degree in a European public space. Indeed, it seems that national interest associations in Estonia remain more national for the time being, reflecting the fact that the country is still busy with nation state building.

Small state national actors interpret the European policy framework in their own way and are largely adapting themselves to European regulations. “Wait and see“ tactics seem to be the case for many groups, who have only recently set up a representation in Brussels. The reason for this is that national groups are heavily dependent on their sponsoring ministries. Ministries are also running and supervising financial means from European funds. Although the situation is changing, many key areas of politics—social, economical, educational life are influenced by national governments. In such a key areas as social and ethnic policy it is rather difficult to see the impact of EU regulations. Sometimes national legacies are of utmost importance.

To sum up, I observed a steady increase in the number of national interest groups affiliated to European organisations, thus giving credit to the scenario envisaged under the EU-CONSENT network (www.eu-consent.net) of ‘re-invented/transformed union’. This increase depends primarily on national opportunity structures,; in other words whether the groups are more or less integrated in national politics, or whether they need to find external support to become more legitimate at the national level. Greens and trade-unions are clear examples. The EU offers new opportunities to the country and its citizens. However these opportunities have to be realised in a complicated network of competing interest groups in a decision-making environment where their voice is frequently taken into account in decisions.

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Interviews with leadership members of Estonian Greens, Trade-Unions, representatives of EU delegations in Brussels: Harri Taliga, Valdur Lahtvee, Tiina Maiberg, Laura Liidja, Helve Toomla, Ann-Ly Reimaa

APP. I

Standing groups in Estonian government for EU policy-making.

Ministry	The amount of groups	Group titles and examples
Social ministry	15	Health care, sexual equality, labour relations, e-health group
Ministry of Finance	5	Financial services, EU structural funds usage group
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	28	External economic cooperation, Working party of foreign relations
Ministry of Education	3	Training and youth, Science and innovation
Ministry of Economy and Education	15	Horizontal competition capacity, trade and commerce group
Ministry of Interior	8	Police cooperation group, citizen defence, drug problem group
Ministry of Agriculture	6	COPA,GOGEGA Materials deliberation, Milk and meat, forestry group
Ministry of Justice	7	Legislative harmonisation group

Compiled by the author

APP. II*Support of Green ideology among political parties (percentage)*

Centre party	17%
Pro patria	14%
Reform	17%
Moderates	26%
People's union	23%
Russian parties	20%
Res publica	19%

*Source: R. Toomla's report in social science III (2007) conference.
(manuscript) University of Tartu*

**Interviews with the representatives of Estonian institutions
in EU institutions. (interview data)**

APP. III

*What you think how much your activity has an impact towards
Eu policy-making? (The questionnaire among EU representatives
in Brussels, percentage)*

Great	0
Considerable	0
Rather moderate	88,8
No impact	11,1

Compiled by the author

APP. IV

Peoples identity. (Random questionnaire, percentage)

How do you feel, what is your identity, where do you belong?

Estonian	77,7%
Nordic	11,1%
European	11,1%
Baltic	0

Compiled by the author

APP. V

Impact of EU. In what social sectors it is felt most of all? (percentage, random questionnaire).

Road construction	38%
Good economical development	28%
Employment	21%
Public administration, and legislation	6%
Consumer protection	4%

Compiled by the author